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## U.S. Flier, Captured by Laos Reds, Heads Home

HONOLULU, Sept. 2 (AP) — A United States Navy pilot who escaped from a Communist prison in Laos returned to American soil today and said, "It's a pleasure to be here."

Lieut. Charles F. Klusmann landed at Honolulu International Airport this morning for a brief stopover on his way home to San Diego, Calif.

His Navy reconnaissance plane was shot down over the Plain des Jarres in central Laos June 6. He parachuted from the unarmed plane and was taken prisoner by the Pathet Lao, but he escaped into neighboring Thailand.

Klusmann was not permitted to speak to reporters. He was taken immediately to Pearl Harbor to make a telephone call to his wife in San Diego.

The 30-year-old officer wore a bandage on his right arm. His hands were heavily scratched and he was limping on his right leg because of a knee injury. He wore blue slippers instead of shoes.

Flowers Presented

Vice Adm. Bernard A. Clary, Deputy Commander in Chief of United States Pacific forces, and Lieutenant Klusmann's aunt, Mrs. Jean Tucker of Honolulu, gave him flowers.

"The whole fleet is proud of you on your own," the admiral said.

Lieutenant Klusmann wrenched his knee while landing after his plane was shot down, Admiral Clary said. The bandages on the right arm were only covering medication on scratches, he said.

Details of the escape from the Communist prison camp have not been made known. Lieutenant Klusmann is being flown to San Diego by way of Travis Air Force Base for hospital examination.

Interviews to Await Tests

WASHINGTON, Sept. 2 (UPI) — The White House said today that Lieutenant Klusmann would be available for interviews after he was seen by doctors.

The Presidential press secretary, George E. Reedy, said that the flier seemed to be in relatively good condition but that the main official concern was for his physical well-being.

Depending on the results of physical and mental examinations, Lieutenant Klusmann may be permitted to talk to newsmen in a week or 10 days, the Pentagon said.

He will be given exhaustive tests to determine whether he suffered physical or mental damage during his ordeal.

Escapes by Americans in the Far East have been extremely rare. Several fled captivity or prisoner "collection points" during the Korean War, but they escaped from actual fighting camps.

HELPED TO SAFETY BY TRIBESMEN

## Happy U. S. Reunion



Lt. Klusmann is welcomed back to American soil by his aunt, Mrs. Jean Tucker, in Honolulu.

SAN DIEGO, Calif., Sept. 2 (UPI) — A Navy pilot who escaped from his communist Laotian captors undergoes medical tests at the Naval hospital today following a jubilant reunion with his parents and comrades.

Lt. Charles F. Klusmann, 30, ended a three-month ordeal late last night when a plane landed at the North Island Naval Air Station here and he and his wife — wearing gay leis from Honolulu — stepped into the waiting arms of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Klusmann of Arcadia, and the lieutenant's younger brother, John, 21.

Also on hand were Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, commander of the Pacific Fleet; Vice Admiral Paul D. Stroop, San Diego Mayor Frank Curran; squadron mates and about 75 to 85 wives and other personnel at the base.

Lt. Klusmann's wife, Sara, 30, had flown to Travis AFB, Calif., earlier in the day to meet her husband, who flew in from Thailand via Honolulu, where he got the leis.

In Vientiane, it was revealed, the anti-communist Meo tribesmen who inhabit the highland jungles of Laos helped Lt. Klusmann to safety. A reliable source said Meos guided Lt. Klusmann thru communist-controlled areas and delivered him to Laotian right-wing forces who arranged for him to get to Thailand.

Details of how Lt. Klusmann separated himself from his captors were not available. But

the source said he was helped by the Meo tribesmen and not helped by Lt. Klusmann's initial break. They made contact with him later.

In San Diego, Lt. Klusmann said:

"I'm certainly happy to be here. I'm glad to be back. I feel good. I expected to be back. I feel real good."

His wife told newsmen: "I feel better than I've ever felt in my whole life."

When Lt. Klusmann saw Admiral Moorer—who was aboard the Kitty Hawk when the lieutenant took off on his ill-fated flight June 6, he said: "I owe you an apology. You told me not to get shot down and I did."

The Admiral replied: "Glad to see you back."

Lt. Klusmann and his wife climbed into a waiting car and were driven off, presumably to the hospital for tests and word from doctors when he could talk to newsmen about his escape from Laos.

"This is a tremendous night, worth waiting for," said the pilot's father as they met at the airfield. "Thank God the ordeal is over."

Lt. Klusmann's mother, Ruth, got a big kiss from her son, who limped slightly and wore two bandages on his right forearm.

"We're glad to have him back," said the mother. "He looks real good, but he's lost some weight."

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